

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

INUIT CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THE LEONARD PUTULIK CULTURAL CENTRE

(July 22, 2021, Iqaluit, Nunavut) Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) President Aluki Kotierk joins Inuit in celebrating the opening of the Leonard Putulik Cultural Centre.

“The Leonard Putulik Cultural Centre is a beautiful hopeful space, full of potential creativity from the community to nurture cultural knowledge transference, while strengthening and celebrating Inuit culture and language. There is no doubt that it will soon be a central cultural hub for Chesterfield Inlet,” said Aluki Kotierk, President of NTI.

The Leonard Putulik Cultural Centre is a culturally appropriate multi-purpose facility. It has many open concept rooms, including spaces for sewing, traditional skin preparation, country food preparation, and tool building. The Centre also offers designated space to host meetings and showcase and sell Inuit art, tools and crafts.

Inuit culture is a living culture. A cultural centre provides space for Inuit to practice and develop excellence in Inuit culture, language and heritage for well-being, skill-building, knowledge and intergenerational connection.

In October of 2017, the Kivalliq Inuit Association presented their plan to establish a cultural centre in each of the seven Kivalliq communities to the NTI Board. At the time, NTI matched the Kivalliq Inuit Association’s funds, in the amount of \$2 million, for this goal. These funds came from the 2015 Settlement Agreement between Canada and NTI for their failure to train and employ Inuit.

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Backgrounder

The Nunavut Infrastructure Gap Analysis Report identified the importance of recreation and culture infrastructure as being crucial to the health of individual communities. Nunavut also lacks heritage and culture infrastructure that meets territory-wide needs to house Nunavut's collections of ethnographic and archaeological artefacts. Nunavut remains the only Canadian jurisdiction without a heritage centre, even though such a centre is necessary to meet commitments under Article 33 of the *Nunavut Agreement*.

The use and occupancy of lands and resources by Inuit in the Nunavut Settlement Area over time is what is called the archaeological record. This record, which represents the rich heritage of Inuit society, is of spiritual, cultural, religious and educational importance to Inuit. Accordingly, Inuit have special rights and interests in certain Settlement areas, as defined by Article 33.

The *Nunavut Agreement* describes the “urgent need” to establish facilities in Nunavut to create a permanent home for our archaeological record. Repatriating important cultural objects and ancestral remains is crucial, as is finding a permanent home in the Nunavut Settlement Area for the archaeological record of this land.

Though a major investment into a suitable heritage centre within Nunavut to house the territory's incredible history and culture has not happened yet—these investments in local cultural centres for the promotion of Inuit culture and identity is instrumental to Inuit health.

In 1954, St. Mary's residence was opened in Chesterfield Inlet by Roman Catholic missionaries. Inuit children were taken from their families and culture to attend the local day school. In 1961, the residence was renamed Turquetil Hall.

References:

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. – The *Nunavut Agreement*

<https://nlca.tunngavik.com>

Moving Forward in Nunavut: An Agreement Relating to Settlement of Litigation and Certain Implementation Matters

<https://www.tunngavik.com/files/2015/05/FINAL-SIGNED-SETTLEMENT-AGREEMENT.pdf>

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation – Chesterfield Inlet (Turquetil Hall)

<https://dev.nctr.ca/residential-schools/northern/chesterfield-inlet-turquetil-hall/>